ecoNews Wire

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

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CHANGES IN STATE LAW AFFECT MANURE APPLICATORS

DES MOINES – Manure applicators who do not inject or incorporate have new separation distances to meet and new areas that that must be protected starting March 1.

"While most people inject or incorporate surface-applied manure, there are certain times of the year when that is not possible," said Jeff Prier, an environmental specialist at the DNR Spencer field office.

Changes in state law last year mean that applicators must follow new rules when they surface apply on no-till ground, frozen ground, pasturelands, when it's wet, or anytime that they cannot incorporate within the same day, Prier added.

The legislation passed last year added water sources and high quality water resources as protected areas. Applicators must stay at least 200 feet away from most protected areas and 800 feet from high quality water resources unless they inject or incorporate on the same day.

A water source is basically any stream or ditch that has definite banks and water flow, Prier said. Most lakes and ponds are considered water sources, but a grassed waterway is not.

High quality water resources are found in about half of Iowa's counties and include trout streams in the northeast, the natural, great lakes area in the northwest, and other streams or lakes that have high water quality, or recreational or ecological significance.

A 750-foot separation distance from buildings such as residences or schools, and public use areas remains in effect for surface manure application.

Small animal feeding operations are not required to meet the separation distances from buildings and public use areas or to be certified, but they must meet the separation distances from designated areas such as sinkholes and water sources. All other applicators must be properly certified and follow the separation distances when not injecting or incorporating.

See the animal feeding section on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.com for more information about state rules on manure application.

For more information, contact Jeff Prier or Ken Hessenius at (712) 262-4177.

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PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT FOR WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT FOR MUD CREEK IN MUSCATINE AND SCOTT COUNTIES

DES MOINES — Plans for improving Mud Creek water quality in Muscatine County are open for public comment through April 11, 2003.

A draft TMDL — or Total Maximum Daily Load — has been developed for Mud Creek. A TMDL calculates the pollutant load a water body can receive while maintaining its designated use and allocates this load among pollutant sources. Designated uses include aquatic life support, full-body contact, or drinking water supply. A final TMDL will be submitted to USEPA for approval after comments received during the public notice period have been considered and incorporated as appropriate.

Mud Creek was on the 1998 impaired waters list for organic enrichment caused by both point and nonpoint pollutant sources. Organic enrichment depresses dissolved oxygen concentration in the water column as microorganisms oxidize organic material for metabolism and reproduction. This situation has caused a dissolved oxygen water quality condition only partially supporting the stream's aquatic life designated use.

The TMDL for Mud Creek will determine how much oxygen demanding material that the stream can receive without impairment in compliance with the Iowa Water Quality Standards. Specifically this TMDL will:

- Identify the adverse impact that organic enrichment is having on aquatic life use and link this to water quality criteria.
- Identify an acceptable pollutant load capacity that ensures attainment of stream aquatic life use.
- Estimate how much the existing load exceeds the load capacity.
- Identify pollutant sources and derive a load allocation for each source.
- Allocate a pollutant load margin of safety to account for uncertainty.
- Provide a plan to reduce existing loads to acceptable levels.

The draft TMDL can be found at:
Internet — Http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/epd/wtresrce/303dnotc.htm

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DNR PROJECT REMOVES HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS FROM 65 IOWA SCHOOLS

DES MOINES — A recently completed program to remove hazardous chemicals from Iowa schools has enjoyed success, but the DNR warned that the work to make schools safer isn't finished.

The Safe Schools Statewide Hazardous Chemical Sweeps Program, funded by the DNR's Solid Waste Alternatives Program and completed in February, removed targeted hazardous chemicals from 65 schools across Iowa. Radioactive chemicals, controlled substances and shock-sensitive (potentially explosive) chemicals were targeted in the sweep of chemistry labs, shops, art rooms, darkrooms, custodial closets and other chemical storage areas.

The school sweep was the second of a two-phase DNR project that began in 2001. Phase one consisted of a series of training seminars for Iowa schools conducted by Drake University. The seminars, as well as a CD-ROM, concentrated on helping schools handle and manage hazardous chemicals. Only those schools that participated in that training were eligible for the school sweep.

Linda Roy, project leader for Terracon Consulting Engineering, which conducted the sweep, said the program was successful.

"We removed thousands of containers of chemicals, and a significant volume of hazardous chemicals," Roy said. "And we had no problems, incidents or spills."

Roy cautions, however, that the work isn't done.

"Just because we have visited 65 schools doesn't mean the job is done," Roy said. "Schools are always buying more chemicals, and we can't find every chemical in every school. It requires an ongoing diligence."

Chemicals in schools, while necessary for proper education, pose a number of potential problems if handled improperly. Incompatible chemicals stored together pose dangers, as does storage of those chemicals in improper cabinets.

Roy said the average parent, resident or city council person might be surprised at the amount of chemicals that are found in schools. They also might be surprised at how dangerous these chemicals can become over time.

"We have a tendency to think, 'Of course schools have chemicals,'" Roy said. "But the properties of these chemicals change over time. They can become unstable."

A number of conclusions were drawn from the sweep. Many schools are aware of the risks posed by chemicals but don't have the means to dispose of them. Other schools lack the funding necessary to purchase proper storage cabinets.

One of the biggest problems, however, is a lack of understanding in how to manage chemicals properly. Roy said that teachers need support in this area.

"Our teachers understand chemistry," Roy said, "but very few of them have been taught how to handle hazardous chemicals properly, or how to read a material safety data sheet. They need training, and they need financial support."

Tom Anderson, a senior environmental specialist for the DNR's Energy and Waste Management Bureau, said that while proper chemical storage and management costs money, it is an investment that can pay in the long run.

"Managing hazardous chemicals on the front end is much less expensive that waiting until you have a problem," Anderson said. "We hope other schools will take the next step and begin the process of cleaning out unnecessary chemicals and properly managing those they keep on hand."

Anderson said the DNR project is complete, but other aid is available from private companies. The DNR has contact information for firms that can help with chemical management.

For more information, contact Tom Anderson at (515) 281-8263, or by e-mail at tom.anderson@dnr.state.ia.us.

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